

Sample Material Excerpted From:

The Double Bottom Line

HOW COMPASSIONATE LEADERS
CAPTIVATE HEARTS AND
DELIVER RESULTS

Donato Tramuto
with Tami Booth Corwin

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Praise for *The Double Bottom Line*

“It’s time for all corporations to be truly committed to meeting the needs of all stakeholders and to playing an essential role in improving our society. Tramuto’s new book, *The Double Bottom Line*, is the essential playbook for compassionate, forward-looking leaders.”

—**Alex Gorsky**, chairman and CEO, Johnson & Johnson

“Compassion is an action that shows in the way you move throughout the world. Let *The Double Bottom Line* be your roadmap to compassionate action that will strengthen your business and better the world.”

—**Thasunda Brown Duckett**, president and CEO at TIAA

“Can you have unfettered capitalism and compassionate leadership? Donato Tramuto shows you how they can be perfectly compatible.”

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Katie Couric Media, co-founder, Stand Up to Cancer,
author of the new memoir, *Going There*

“Maximizing only financial interest is not sustainable. Leaders who drive the highest levels of long-term success know how to maximize the interests of all. Compassion is an essential element in that. *The Double Bottom Line* gives actionable examples of how compassionate leaders do this with terrific results. The time is right for this book.”

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“*The Double Bottom Line* is required reading for the next generation.”

—**Governor John Baldacci**

“We have the choice to be the difference in our own lives. When we connect with compassion it drives passion and purpose within ourselves. We can then elevate others as individuals, companies can elevate their employees and members, and together, I think we can change the world. Donato Tramuto’s book, *The Double Bottom Line*, gives us examples and inspiration to help us do just that.”

—**Janine Broussard**, founder, H.U.G. Reading Program

“We all have the power to make a difference, whether through instituting large-scale changes or by helping others in the course of our daily lives—in our community, workplace, or home. Compassion is the heart of what drives our ability to make this impact. Donato Tramuto’s book illustrates the power we all have to help make the world a better place.”

—**Senator William Frist, MD**, acclaimed heart-lung transplant surgeon, humanitarian, former US Senate majority leader, and founding partner, Frist Cressey Ventures

“Having compassion doesn’t mean that you can’t be tough, that you can’t be results oriented. This book shows that compassionate leadership is, in fact, strong leadership that leads to higher-performing teams, greater innovation, and better results overall.”

—**Jeff Arnold**, co-founder, chairman, and CEO of Sharecare;
Founder, WebMD

“I see the mission of leadership as the unrelenting effort to improve the conditions of people within an organization, a community, or a society. It’s not always the easy thing to do. This book will provide leaders with valuable insights and actionable examples that will help them in their pursuit of a more compassionate world.”

—**Dr. Sandro Galea**, dean, Boston University School of Public Health

“Donato Tramuto leads with compassion in addition to writing about it. We can trust his voice and heart to guide us toward becoming more compassionate leaders. The advice and inspiration he shares, along with the wisdom of the leaders he interviewed, creates a beautiful map for anyone seeking places and spaces to help others, and themselves.”

—**Reverend Becca Stevens**, founder and president, Thistle Farms, speaker, Episcopal priest, and author of the new book, *Practically Divine*

The Double Bottom Line

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DELIVER RESULTS



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Part I



Defining a New Model of Leadership

Chapter 1

It's Time to Flip Traditional Leadership on Its Head

If I asked you what training to be a priest has in common with training to sell drugs, I'm pretty certain you'd say, "Nothing!" But, in 1980, I was doing both.

After years of training to be a priest, I was wavering on whether the priesthood was right for me. I decided to take a sabbatical from the seminary until I had more certainty. During that time, I worked as a hospital chaplain, taught a course in philosophy, and generally contemplated my future. One day, when I was reading the newspaper, I saw an ad for a pharmaceutical sales position with Marion Labs. On a whim, I decided to apply. That became my first job in the business world.

After years of preparing for a life of ministry, I wanted to find some kind of purpose or deeper meaning in this new job, something more than reaching sales goals. Years before, my sister-in-law Rosemary had died tragically during childbirth because of a simple and preventable medication error. I adored Rosemary and had trouble making sense of her loss. I tried to see this job as an opportunity to educate doctors, in the hope that I might help prevent future senseless deaths like Rosemary's.

I started work at the beginning of what many have since referred to as the “decade of greed.” My boss Hank seemed to fit right in. A former college hockey player, he was still very competitive and wanted to win above all else. He made sure that his employees knew that his only focus was to make *a lot* of money. He was tough and far from compassionate. Hank was an example of the type of old-school manager who set aggressive goals and used toughness to push his employees to achieve those goals.

I was miserable. I lasted less than a year in that job and left it disillusioned about the workplace and still confused about my future. Hank showed me a business world with no heart. I wasn’t sure that world was right for someone who was more influenced by the seminary than by sales. The competitive life in a high-pressure sales job was a jarring change from the contemplative life of the seminary.

Despite this experience, I ultimately concluded that Hank’s way was not the only way. I also came to see that working for a for-profit company still allowed me to have an opportunity to help other people. I decided not to finish my seminary studies and to commit to a career in business instead. But the experience with Hank cemented a belief that still drives me: Leaders can be successful without sacrificing their values.

I entered an MBA program at the University of Buffalo. While pursuing an MBA, I went back to work again as a sales rep for a pharmaceutical company, this time for Boehringer Ingelheim. Fortunately, there I worked for a manager named Markus whose team leadership and goal achievement style was quite different from Hank’s. I thrived under this positive leadership; so did the whole team. We consistently exceeded our sales goals, and I quietly noticed that we all did it together and without misery!

My first two managers were a study in leadership contrasts. Hank, an aggressive, old-school, win-at-all-costs manager, and Markus, a positive, empowering, team-oriented leader. There were two lessons in this:

1. You can learn just as much from negative leadership examples as you can from positive ones. Hank proved that to me.

2. A positive manager can produce better results than a negative one. In fact, more often than not, positive leaders with skill and knowledge excel at producing positive results.

The Evolution of Leadership

In the 1980s, there was a tension between the human-centered and money/power-centered forces that are still competing in our workplaces and society today. On the human- or team-centered side, surely one of the most notable business leaders of the time was Lee Iacocca, the CEO of Chrysler. He got a lot of press; he was frequently interviewed, observed, and—though often critiqued—emulated.

Lee Iacocca was famous for saving Chrysler. In manufacturing, Chrysler was a monolithic, union worker-driven business. Charged with leading it, Iacocca took it from the brink of bankruptcy and transformed it into a successful and innovative company.

He was a transformational leader who focused on the concept of teamwork. Unlike many dictatorial, “the-CEO-knows-best” leaders before him, he believed that a CEO didn’t have to have all the answers. He described his leadership approach in this quote: “I hire people who are brighter than me, and then I get out of the way.”

Around that time, a more rank-and-file-empowering and less top-down-controlling management style started to take hold and unfold in business, and Lee Iacocca no doubt fit that mold. Certainly, the older, more traditional, top-down-controlling type of leadership persisted. In fact, we still see it today in all sorts and sizes of businesses.

The 1980s also produced plenty of win-at-all-costs leaders. In fact, that was probably still the dominant style. There were plenty of infamous examples on Wall Street who took the model to an extreme and ended in disaster, like Ken Lay, the founder of Enron; Dick Fuld, whose hubris was reportedly responsible for the collapse of one of the most prestigious banks at the time, Lehman Brothers; and Jordan Belfort, the real-life inspiration for the movie *The Wolf of Wall Street*.

I believe that the difference today—four decades later—is that the human-centered leadership approach is finally pulling ahead and taking hold as the better fit for the challenges and opportunities that lie before leaders. Its influence is strengthening, and its adoption is spreading in organizations big and small. I believe its momentum will allow it to become the standard.

As Victor Hugo said, “No army can withstand the strength of an idea whose time has come.” I’m certain that compassionate leadership’s time has come.

Defining Compassionate Leadership

I see compassionate leadership as listening to others’ challenges, needs, or problems; having empathy for them; and then actually doing something about it. To me, empathy—the ability to think about and feel for another person’s problems, suffering, or experience—is a critical component. Compassion, on the other hand, usually starts with or coexists with empathy, but it adds the desire and action to relieve that person’s suffering, help them overcome a challenge, or otherwise better their situation.

Compassion shows that you have committed to the person. You’ve embraced the dignity of that individual. I’ve always loved the line from *Man of La Mancha*, “Be willing to march into hell for a heavenly cause,” and I think that’s also what compassion is sometimes: being willing to take that road less traveled and set yourself apart from what others might be afraid to do. In an organization, because it is only people who get results, I think it means that you invest your time in individuals, and that is how the organization prospers. In other words, people are your true focus.

As I mentioned in the introduction, I reached out to more than forty of the most compassionate leaders I knew to interview them in depth for this book. I chose leaders who had demonstrated success in their own arenas as well as exhibited a compassionate leadership

style. These are leaders who have practiced and refined this approach and can speak to it from a place of wisdom and experience. The first question I asked every leader we interviewed for this book was how they defined compassionate leadership. Their words were different, but they all conveyed the same essence.

Jeff Arnold, founder and CEO of Sharecare, defined compassionate leadership in terms of how it can be practiced in an organization. I've known Jeff since he founded WebMD, and I've long admired his leadership. When asked about how he sees compassion in practice, he explained: "I'm very mission driven. I've been around digital health for a long time trying to solve the complicated problems of the health-care system and how to improve well-being. I think of compassion as how we put ourselves in the shoes of another person. Sometimes that person is a consumer; sometimes they are a patient, an employee, a health-plan member, or a friend. It's trying to put myself in their shoes and know what they're dealing with. It's feeling that shared compassion and then trying to take action to work through solutions together."

As a pioneer in digital health, Jeff is, among other things, data driven. He spoke about the importance of pairing empathy with action in that context: "Data is only as good as the insight, and the insight is only as good as the action. That's our approach. Can I understand the situation? What insights can I get from that? Then what do I do about it?" In short, yes, Jeff is a *data-driven* leader. At the same time, he is a *people-focused* one. He sees getting outstanding bottom-line results not as separate from his leadership style but rather as a *result* of it.

Jeff Arnold is a great example of how compassionate leaders can be tough *and* compassionate, people-focused *and* very successful. He has been an ambitious entrepreneur, and anyone who has negotiated a deal with him knows he is a tough negotiator. After founding WebMD in the nineties, Jeff became a billionaire before the age of thirty and has gone on to continue his focus on how to help people by improving health care.

Top Down Is Out

The great leaders we interviewed for this book described this shift to compassionate leadership as a movement from head to heart. They described the place from which a leader leads as no longer from the top of an organization, dictating down. Instead, they lead from the center or bottom up. The focus moves from leader-centric to team- and customer-centric. The drive moves from profit-first to people-first and from shareholder value to stakeholder value. Practicing this form of leadership focuses on the actions a leader can take to operationalize empathy in a sincere and effective way to help the organization or the community reach goals and become better along the way.

Traditional leadership models have been hierarchical and top-down. This type of leadership is often about senior leaders thinking they need to have or do have all the answers, that they need to give all the direction and must supply the big ideas. The leader assumes the role of sole strategist. This often comes with dictatorial communication from the top down and, at its extreme, can be management by force, even bullying, which still happens in too many organizations.

This model is top heavy in terms of who is expected to contribute and who has power or a voice in an organization. If the ideas are coming from the top down, companies and organizations are missing ideas from the ranks. Given that the average CEO in America is fifty-nine years old, male, and white,¹ and the total workforce is younger and more diverse, it also suggests that companies with an old-school style are going to be missing ideas, innovations, and a deep understanding of their customer base that their more diverse, recently schooled, and digitally and globally savvy workforces can offer. In addition, if there isn't a regular and true many-way communication that reaches all those within the organization, leaders will miss issues and, as a result, live with the consequences of not resolving them.

The new compassion-driven model is much more flexible, as the stories throughout this book demonstrate. The top-down model is literally being flipped on its head by unquestionably great leaders who

practice a more modern leadership style. It's more about bottom-up or center-out structures, in which the leader is the central facilitator of innovation and problem-solving, using the great ideas that come from all members of the team, regardless of where in the business they work, to serve the customers. Meanwhile, everyone participates in the innovations, changes, and successes, and thrives.

Great leaders who use this approach understand that people and profits are concerns that are not mutually exclusive but actually dovetail naturally. They see that infusing their leadership with a deep commitment to compassion is the accelerant that gives it added power.

Leading from the Center

I see the role of a leader as a facilitator of ideas, communication, and culture among employees, team members, and constituents. The leader is like an orchestra conductor who knows how to get the best from the unique contribution of each instrument while never playing the instrument in the musician's place. The leader is an influencer who knows how to get the best work from staff and how to support them as they work together to create a beautiful and powerful result.

Stefano Lucchini, a great friend of mine from my second home in Italy, described the disparity between the old and new models of leadership well. I work with Stefano on initiatives with the RFK Foundation, where he is chairman of the RFK Human Rights Foundation of Italy and where I serve on the board and support him as cochairman. Stefano said: "Leadership could be narrowly constructed, focused on how to manage teams, stay on the top, plan, and direct for the next issue. I take a broader view of leadership and subscribe to the eastern philosophy of leaders not at the top of a hierarchy but at the center of a network of talents, connections, and issues. Leadership in this sense is about understanding the different positions and points of view at stake, acting as a servant leader with compassion and understanding for the people I work with, our clients, our competitors, and the many other important

stakeholders with whom we interact while fulfilling our range of societal responsibilities.”

The culture has to be one in which the leader recognizes that their role is not to have all the answers. On the contrary, their role is to have all the questions, and then to listen to the individuals around them in a way that creates a sense of unity and a respect for dignity. As a leader, when you listen to the stories of others as they open up for perhaps the first time in a work environment, you become more vulnerable. Which, as you’ll learn, is a good thing.

You’re not cultivating a culture of similarities. Your business’s culture and how you harmoniously thrive and prosper together is the result of having built upon differences. And I think that’s what I have fostered the most: inclusion. The reality of culture is that nobody can get anything done in any role without other people.

In 2020, I had the honor of joining St. Joseph’s College in Maine as their first-ever Honorary Scholar-in-Residence. One of the great benefits of this role is spending time with their president, Jim Dlugos, a true compassionate leader. When he was appointed president, he was described as a collaborator who can forge a common vision among people. I asked him about this, since it is an important part of compassionate leadership.

He told me that he was asked by someone at Maine Public Radio about his vision before he started in the role. He recalled that when asked, he was down in New Jersey and said he didn’t have a vision for St. Joseph’s, as “he wasn’t anywhere near the place.” He said: “I have to go there first and get to know those folks before I can begin to talk about not what *my* vision is but what *our* vision is. One of the roles I have as president is to be the chief storyteller, the gatherer of people’s memories and hopes and frustrations, in some cases, and then to tie those together in a more coherent narrative. If we’re going to move forward together effectively, each of us has to have enough buy-in for the thing that we end up sharing. In the middle of that Venn diagram, that’s the space where we overlap.” In Jim’s role, he works from the center of that Venn diagram, bringing together those diverse voices and facilitating a way forward while making sure each one is heard and represented.

This type of leadership strives to accomplish a couple of things. The first goal is to get the best from each contributor, allowing individuals to work to their best potential. The second goal is to create the conditions that allow all people to collaborate and work in harmony with each other, cultivating the greatest potential from the entire organization.

As part of this, I see the leader as a chief obstruction remover. As CEO, I used to ask the question all the time, “What obstacles can I help you remove to get your job done?” Believe me, most people had an answer to that question! I took that role seriously. It not only helped us all get more done and materialize a better result, but also it let my people know I cared about them.

Laying the foundation for this model of compassionate leadership starts with how you define your values. By that, I don’t mean it’s about what the leader says are the values, and it’s not the leader dictating those values. I mean, it starts with how you define them, the process by which you define them. I believe that leaders need to empower teams to collectively develop a company’s culture and values. Some company CEOs force values on the organization, but there is a richer opportunity to empower the organization to participate. Remember, the focus is center out or bottom up, allowing people from all levels in an organization to participate and have a voice in the creation of this compassionate culture.

I’ve been fortunate to know many leaders who practice compassionate leadership. Most of the leaders interviewed for this book described their practice in one of three ways: team-centric, community-centric, or people-centric. In the end, all three are really just about the people.

Team-Centric Leadership

Dr. Craig Samitt is a good friend and health-care industry colleague of mine. He was recently president and CEO of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota and its parent company, Stella, and is a nationally recognized expert and thought leader on health-care delivery and

policy. He was named one of 50 Most Influential Physician Executives and Leaders by *Modern Healthcare*.²

Craig is someone who has lived, worked, and succeeded for decades as a strong and compassionate leader. He delineated a style of leadership in which “the leaders’ focus is not about themselves.” For him, embracing a compassionate leadership style is not just good but also *essential* to hitting your goals and, in his case, to transforming the health-care industry. Craig told us: “We live in a world that is very leader-centric and physician-centric, not teammate-centric and patient-centric. As I work to reinvent health care, it’s very much through this philosophy, that to lead compassionately it’s about the team, it’s about the patient. It’s not about the leader.” For him, it’s very simple. “We put people before profits,” he said. “We put kindness before fear. It creates a followership when folks lead this way.”

Like all of the leaders interviewed in this book, Craig had to respond to the coronavirus pandemic and help his team navigate it. The way he did so is a case study in compassion, and it paid off. “It was very clear to me that our team was our number one priority,” said Craig. “So, the very first thing we were going to do, without thinking twice, was to send people home. We would get them all that they needed, and more than anything else, we wanted to keep every one of our teammates safe, out of the hospital, and healthy.”

I asked Craig how his role changed during the pandemic. “No one really teaches how to lead in the midst of double or triple crises,” he said, “and so I felt like I was no longer a chief executive officer. I immediately became a chief communications officer and a chief vulnerability officer, because our team wanted to know that I was struggling with the same things they were. I was. Compassionate leadership is removing a mask, removing a shield, or removing a protective coating. It’s being as raw and vulnerable, as emotional and challenged as one’s teammates. It opened us up to have more candid and transparent discussions about what people needed so that we could listen and then act.

“One of the early things we found was that the physical safety of our teammates was not enough,” Craig continued. “We were worried

about people's well-being, about their at-home workplace comfort. Some of our teammates were not just full-time employees, they were also full-time teachers and full-time parents. So, we asked, 'What can we do in this unprecedented time to help you cope?' We did a round of surveys. The first was an introductory 'How is it going at home?' I think at the beginning folks found it sort of unique and a bit fun to be at home. That quickly evolved. Folks were uncomfortable working at home; they didn't have separate workspaces that were conducive for them to work. So, we offered resources to make the home more comfortable. We added several resources that focused on people's well-being, their mental state. We also wanted to be sure they were staying connected. We started contests; some departments had virtual Olympics as a way to make sure that people were staying engaged. If we were just a run-of-the-mill employer, we might have made sure folks had the technical tools and left it at that. But in addition to an employer, we wanted to be colleagues, we wanted to be friends, we wanted to be caregivers in many respects."

Craig and his team also noticed that they were seeing a decline in demand for services and were worried that people would feel underutilized and be fearful for their jobs. They offered an opportunity for their teammates to give back to the state and to the community by volunteering to be contact tracers to help prevent the further spread of COVID-19. So, if they felt that they weren't busy enough doing their day jobs, they had the chance to find great fulfillment by helping their community stay well.

Craig Samitt's leadership through crises has paid off for the organization and made his connection to his team stronger. He did ongoing work to improve company culture and measures this work with noted consulting firm Heidrick & Struggles's culture-shaping division, Senn Delaney. Measured after months of the pandemic, the most recent employee engagement results skyrocketed. The jump in scores across the whole company was the biggest they've ever recorded. This was due to very intentional actions at every level. A big component was Craig's leadership and his authentic engagement with employees through the crisis. One employee noted: "Now, more than ever, it's comforting to

me to know that my CEO is not some *Wizard of Oz*-type figure up at the top, but is instead someone who truly cares about and appreciates the rest of us.”

Community-Centric Leadership

In addition to the Tramuto Foundation, I founded a second non-profit organization called Health eVillages with the specific mission of helping to bring modern health care to underserved areas around the world. In reviewing the name via a closer lens, you will see it really stands for “Heal the Villages.” Our first project was helping to support services at a health clinic in the small Kenyan village of Lwala that is now called the Lwala Community Alliance. This is an amazing story of life-changing community-centric leadership started by two brothers from the village of Lwala.

When founders Milton and Fred Ochieng were boys, their village was poor and lacked access to health care. When women had babies, they had no care during their pregnancies, and children were delivered by unskilled village midwives. According to Lwala’s annual reports, in the entire county, only twenty-six percent of births had a skilled health-care provider in attendance, which meant that if there were complications, there was no one to help, resulting in high infant and maternal mortality rates. There was no hospital, no doctor, and no cell service. But they did have a strong community, and Milton and Fred’s father had a dream of bringing a health clinic to their village.

As the boys grew older, it was apparent that they had great academic promise. They got scholarships from Dartmouth College. Their village sold chickens, goats, and cows to pay for airfare to the United States with only one request: “Do not forget us.” The brothers went on to Vanderbilt University Medical School and became doctors.

While away, their mother and father died tragically of AIDS. Milton and Fred returned to Lwala to follow through on their father’s

dream of building a health clinic, which they opened in 2007. The clinic has since expanded to become the Lwala Community Alliance. The first project Health eVillages supported there was the building of a maternity ward.

I'll never forget my first visit to Lwala. It was a long and arduous journey from the United States, first to Nairobi, and then from there to Lwala via a small plane that looked too old to fly. Doctors Without Borders escorted our team by car from the plane's landing site to our destination to make sure we were safe. Minutes into my drive, I looked out the window and saw a young boy dead on the road, struck by a car and left there. I learned that it happened all the time—poor children with no place to go in dangerous surroundings.

But when I got to Lwala, I felt safe and at home. I was overwhelmed by the love in this village. I was greeted with a huge hug by Lillian, a mother of twins. She told me that she had been rushed to the hospital after a complication during her pregnancy. If it weren't for the medical app we provided to the clinic, she and her babies would have died. To this day, I think of those boys as part of my extended family.

Help Communities Solve Their Own Problems

The Lwala Community Alliance is led by co-CEOs Julius Mbeya and Ash Rogers. They have shown how compassionate leadership can foster innovative solutions to very big problems, and how compassionate communities can be empowered to solve their own problems. Their approach highlights how compassionate leadership is not about a leader stepping in to single-handedly deliver the solution to a problem; it's about knowing that the best and most lasting outcomes for a community come when the leader supports or facilitates the community in solving the problem themselves. This is especially important in a community like many in Kenya that have a history of oppression by external forces, which results in a lack of trust toward actions that are offered to or imposed on them by outsiders.

The co-CEOs use the term “community-led” to describe this approach. Ash Rogers explained that one way they understand the level of community-driven development is by charting progress along a continuum of participation. On the left end of the continuum, the community is not participating in solving the problem, and the solution is being given to them or even forced on them. On the other end of the continuum, communities design and deliver their own solutions. The goal is always to move further to the right on this spectrum, to the full participation end of the continuum.

Julius Mbeya grew up in a neighboring village that was very poor. His father only had a third-grade education. His mother never went to school at all, though he calls her the most influential person he knows. Because he comes from the area he now serves, he told us that he felt humbled by the chance to help. Based on where he came from, the suffering he has seen—brothers and sisters who died of AIDS—he knew that could have easily been him. While he does have a unique understanding of the needs of the community, even more important is that he knows that the people who are experiencing the problems or suffering now are the ones who understand the problem best.

Julius described it like this: “Most of the time, solutions are implemented without communities. What has been a blessing for us is this idea of ‘working from below,’ so that we have knowledge and research and the ability to have the best solutions that can be implemented. Compassion is about accepting that the people who are experiencing the problem understand the problem better, and they have valid solutions. Compassion is the driver of innovation, of creating room for people to be able to think.

“Compassion is about responding to the community in a way that answers their deep questions and deep fears,” he continued. “And, bringing back hope—I think that is what the organization has been able to do. Despite the challenges, the people of Lwala can still hope for a better future for themselves and their children.” The results back this up. What was a twenty-six percent skilled health provider-performed infant-delivery rate before the Lwala Community Alliance is now up to 100 percent.³

People-Centric Leadership

For me, one of the most exciting developments in the movement toward more compassion in leadership was the campaign of President Joe Biden, a campaign that had compassion at its core. President Biden embodies the nature of compassionate leadership. At his inauguration, he addressed a deeply divided nation still hurting from all that led up to that day. His words were compassionate, and they exemplify this new type of leader. He said, “We celebrate the triumph not of a candidate, but of a cause, the cause of democracy. . . . The American story depends not on any one of us, not on some of us, but on all of us.” He suggested that empathy might bridge our division, that “if we show a little tolerance and humility, and if we are willing to stand in the other people’s shoes—as my mom would say—just for a moment, stand in their shoes.”

Regardless of party affiliation, I think Biden’s focus on human values will inspire the new generation of leaders. I’ve been fortunate to meet Joe Biden on several occasions, and the empathy born of his lifetime of losses emanates. Around the time of his election, headline after headline focused on his compassionate and empathetic style: From *The Atlantic*, “Biden’s Empathy Is What Matches Him to This Moment”; from CNBC, “Biden Is Leading by Example When He Cries in Public. Emotional Honesty Makes Men Strong”; and from *The American Prospect*, “Biden’s Secret Weapon—Compassion.” Leading up to the election, Dr. Jill Biden tweeted, “Compassion is on the ballot.” In this case, compassion won.

In many of our interviews, compassionate leadership was described as not just being about employees, customers, or community members, but also about people. I interviewed former governor of Maine, John Baldacci, because he really lives this philosophy. I’ve known John for years after meeting him through his sister Rosemary. He described his philosophy of compassionate leadership being about the people.

We're All In It Together

Governor John Baldacci had a long career in public service, starting at age twenty-three, when he was the youngest member of the Bangor City Council. He went on to serve in the Maine State Senate, in the US House of Representatives, and then as the first Democrat to be elected governor of Maine in twenty years. His leadership was clearly embraced. In his career, he never lost an election.

During his service, Governor Baldacci focused on efforts to improve lives through economic development, health-care initiatives, and equal rights. He passed legislation in Maine that prohibited discrimination based on sexual orientation, and, after quite a fight, legalized gay marriage. He also focused on education and worked to improve Maine's public schools.

His view on leadership can be distilled down to some very simple yet powerful philosophies, which he described to me in our conversation. "I think when you think of compassion or empathy, some people think it's a weakness," he said. "I think compassion is when you can relate to people and understand where they're coming from. Then you're able to put that into your decision-making. You may come up with a difficult decision that needs to be made for the best interests of the country, but at the same time you've taken into consideration a compassion, a new empathy about their struggles. To me, it's hard to be a leader and be compassionate, but at the same time I think it's required reading for this next generation."

John Baldacci comes from a large and close-knit family, so it didn't surprise me to hear that he thinks about those who he serves in the same way he thinks about family. He said: "We're all part of a large family. We're all in the same boat. Sometimes my friends would say they came over on the *Mayflower*, and I'd say, well we came over on the *Niña*, the *Pinta*, and the *Santa Maria*, but we're all in the same boat now. So, I think that we're all in it together.

"That we are all in it together is what I think this coronavirus pandemic has been showing us. I think it's showed all of us that the homeless person on the street in front of Starbucks or the person

struggling on the park bench in New York should have health care. They all should have access to vaccinations. They all should have opportunities. To think, 'Oh, this is not going to happen to me,' is being shortsighted, seeing things with rose-colored glasses on."

Baldacci's family kept him humble. That humility is a common trait among compassionate leaders. "People in my campaign felt like I wasn't talking enough about what I was doing," Baldacci said, "that I had to promote myself more. I told them, in a family of eight, seven brothers and sisters, you can't be thinking you're the big shot in the family. You have to be able to realize that you have to keep yourself and your ego in check."

Baldacci's father had a big impact on his focus on people. "My father used to wash dishes at our family's restaurant," Baldacci recalls, "so I could go to a desk and be in the State Senate. I used to come back from the Senate to work with my father on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. I'd be rushing to get the bar set up and get everything done, and my father would tell me to stop. I'd say, 'Dad, you've got a lot of work to do.' He'd say, 'I didn't wash dishes to send you to school and have you not tell me what you did for the people today. Instead, tell me what you've done for the people today.' So, he would stand there, and he would give me a test: What did I do for the people today? I had a sign made up with that question on it to hang in the governor's office to remind everybody that we were to always ask ourselves what we did for the people today. I think that was what he instilled in me from the beginning. I didn't think of it at the time, but I was lucky to have that. It gave me the opportunity to be governor of the state and to be able to set the agenda and to work and get things done." And he did get things done! Motivating and optimizing your biggest asset—your people—is the most effective way to get things done, and that's at the core of compassionate leadership.

In the next chapters I'll be highlighting some key concepts that are vital for the deeper understanding of this leadership style, including the essential ingredients of action, toughness, and heart—and how this style gets more from people, solves problems better, and creates more productivity.

END-OF-CHAPTER EXERCISES

WHAT KIND OF LEADER ARE YOU?

Take this self-assessment to gauge where you fall on the continuum between very traditional and modern leadership.

1. In a meeting with people who report to you or are junior to you in role or experience, you tend to:
 - a. Talk most of the time
 - b. Talk a lot but make time for others who want to speak
 - c. Talk less and later in the meeting, allowing others to be heard or give input before you
2. When making important decisions, you:
 - a. Make them on your own and direct your team accordingly
 - b. Sometimes ask for input, more so from others who are expert or experienced
 - c. Seek input from all levels and from many perspectives (when appropriate)
3. You ask those who report to you about how you can help them remove obstacles in their way:
 - a. Never
 - b. Occasionally
 - c. Regularly

4. Your team is:
 - a. Not very diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, background, age, or expertise
 - b. Somewhat diverse but could be more diverse
 - c. Very diverse
5. You put the following person's needs first:
 - a. Yours
 - b. Shareholders/investors
 - c. Employees/customers
6. You ask your direct reports/employees about their well-being:
 - a. Never
 - b. Sometimes
 - c. Often
7. You explain how your employees' jobs relate to a broader purpose and mission:
 - a. Not at all
 - b. Sometimes, but I don't reinforce it
 - c. Often, and I reinforce it regularly

Self-Assessment: If you selected mostly *A* answers, you are likely a traditional, possibly old-school type of leader. If you chose more *B*s or a mix of *A*s, *B*s, and *C*s, your leadership style is a mixture of traditional and modern. If you picked more *C*s, you are a more modern leader.